



Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes

Journal of medieval and humanistic studies

19 | 2010

Les îles britanniques : espaces et identités

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/crm/12009>

DOI: 10.4000/crm.12009

ISSN: 2273-0893

Publisher

Classiques Garnier

Printed version

Date of publication: 30 June 2010

Number of pages: 235-248

ISSN: 2115-6360

Electronic reference

Gábor Klaniczay, « Healing with Certain Conditions », *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes* [Online], 19 | 2010, Online since 30 June 2013, connection on 19 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/crm/12009> ; DOI : 10.4000/crm.12009



Healing with Certain Conditions : The Pedagogy of Medieval Miracles

Abstract : This article examines a specific component of medieval healing miracle accounts : the conditions set by the saint for helping those who require his/her mediation, focusing on two selections, an early medieval group and a thirteenth-century group. The former is represented by the miracles of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, St. Martin of Tours, St. Foy, and St. Benedict, the latter by the miracles of St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Thuringia), St. Stanislaus of Cracow and St. Margaret of Hungary. I analyze these miracles in the context of a broader set of do ut des type exchange transactions related to the supplication, the vow, and the ritual manifestations accompanying the experience of the healing and its public announcement. I also consider another miracle genre, the miracle of vengeance or miracle of punishment, which frequently sanctions the negligence of not fulfilling the supplicant's original promise. I also ask whether there is a differentiation according to social status in this religious phenomenon, whether the «coercion of saints» has a distinctly lower class, «popular» variant. Surprisingly, the later dossiers, based on the massive miracle testimonies of the canonization processes present fewer examples for what I call hagiographic «pedagogy». The more elaborate moral discourse of late medieval Christianity obviously used other constraining devices and miracles were no longer necessary for that purpose.

Résumé : Cet article se penche sur une partie spécifique de l'ensemble de récits de guérisons miraculeuses : les conditions posées par le saint ou la sainte pour son aide, se focalisant sur deux collections du début du Moyen Âge et du XIII^e siècle. Le premier groupe comprend les miracles de saint Damien et saint Côme, de saint Martin de Tours, de sainte Foy, et de saint Benoît ; le deuxième ceux de sainte Élisabeth de Hongrie (de Thuringe), saint Stanislas de Cracovie et sainte Marguerite de Hongrie. J'analyse ces récits dans le contexte plus large d'une transaction d'échange (do ut des) qui imbrique la supplication, le vœu, et les manifestations rituelles qui accompagnent la guérison et son annonce publique. Je considère aussi le genre du miracle de vengeance ou punition qui sanctionne souvent la négligence du vœu du miraculé. Je pose la question s'il y a une différenciation qui dépend du statut social dans ce phénomène religieux, si ce processus de coercition possède une variante pour les classes populaires. À ma surprise, les dossiers plus tardifs, fondés sur les amples témoignages aux procès de canonisation offrent moins d'exemples de ce que j'appelle « la pédagogie hagiographique ». Le discours moral plus élaboré du Moyen Âge chrétien plus tardif évidemment utilisait d'autres moyens de contrainte et ne se servait plus de miracles pour atteindre ses buts moraux.

The models for the healing miracles of the saints were above all those ascribed to Christ in the Gospels¹, and the miracles *in vita* described in the late

¹ H. C. Kee, *Medicine, Miracles and Magic in New Testament Times*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986 ; a still useful account is in R. C. Trench D. D., *Notes on the Miracles of Our Lord*, London, Kegan Paul, 1886.

antique and early medieval « holy biographies » did indeed amply draw on this model. As Gregory of Tours put it, saints were repeating the acts of the Savior, with the help of his *virtus*². As for the other, much more numerous class of miracles, the *miracula post mortem*, which occurred near the relics or even at a distance after a solemn vow addressed to the saint, other antique traditions may have had some influence, such as dream healing in the Asclepius temple in Epidaurus, or holy wells and trees, or other faith-healing sites³.

Miracle stories have been central constituents of hagiographic narrative since late antiquity.⁴ Besides being added to the accounts of the passion of the martyrs and the legends of confessor saints, miracle lists related to important shrines also existed as an autonomous genre : those of St. Thecla⁵, Sts. Cosmas and Damian, Sts. Cyrus and John⁶, St. Artemios⁷, or later of St. Martin⁸, St. Foy⁹, St. Benedict¹⁰, and others provided many hundreds of miracle accounts with elaborate references to eyewitnesses and including colorful oral reports.

Late medieval miracle documentation produced by canonization investigations allows an even more detailed insight into this phenomenon than

² Gregorius Turonensis, *De virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi*, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, 1.2., p. 134-211.

³ M. Hamilton, *Incubation and the Cure of Diseases in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*, London, Henderson, 1905 ; E. J. Edelstein and L. Edelstein, *Asclepius. A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1945, 2nd ed., 1998 ; K. Kerényi, *Der göttliche Arzt. Studien über Asklepios und seine Kultstätten*, 2nd ed., Darmstadt, Gentner, 1956.

⁴ M. Heinzelmann, « Une source de base de la littérature hagiographique latine : Le recueil des miracles », in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés (IV^e-XII^e siècle)*, Actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris, 2-5 mai 1979, Paris, Études Augustiniennes, 1981, p. 235-257.

⁵ G. Dagron, ed., *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle : texte grec, traduction et commentaire*, Bruxelles, Société des Bollandistes, 1978.

⁶ Hippolyte Delehaye, « Les recueils antiques de Miracles de saints », *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925), p. 1-85, 305-325 ; A.-J. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean (extraits), Saint Georges*, Paris, A. et J. Picard, 1971.

⁷ V. S. Crisafulli and J. W. Nesbitt, *The Miracles of St. Artemios. A Collection of Miracle Stories by an Anonymous Author of Seventh-Century Byzantium*, Leiden, Brill, 1997.

⁸ Gregorius Turonensis, *De virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi* ; *id.*, *De passione et virtutibus sancti Iuliani martyris*, ed. B. Krusch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* 1.2. p. 404-422 ; *cf.* R. van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 162-318.

⁹ L. Robertini, ed., *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, Spoleto, Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo, 1994 ; P. Sheingorn and R. L. A. Clark, ed., *The Book of Sainte Foy*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995 ; K. Ashley and P. Sheingorn, *Writing Faith. Text, Sign and History in the Miracles of Sainte Foy*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1999.

¹⁰ E. de Certain, ed., *Miracula S. Benedicti*, Paris, Société d'Histoire de France, 1858 ; *cf.* B. Töpfer, « The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage in Burgundy and Aquitaine at the Time of the Monastic Reform », in T. Head and R. Landes, ed., *The Peace of God : Religious Responses to Social Turmoil in France around the Year 1000*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 41-57.

earlier hagiographic narratives, getting closer to experience and to social status and revealing more about the complex mechanisms of miraculous healing.

This rich source material has understandably attracted the attention of historical (but also theological, psychological, literary, anthropological and medical) research¹¹. The genre of the miracle has been analyzed by a series of important conferences, including those organized by Evelyne Patlagean and Pierre Riché on *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés* in Nanterre, 1979¹². Sofia Boesch Gajano on *Miracoli* in Rome, 1989¹³, Denise Aigle on *Miracle et karāma* in Ivry, 1995¹⁴. Klaus Herbers and Martin Heinzelmänn on *Mirakel im Mittelalter* in Weingarten, 2000¹⁵, or Fernando Vidal on *Miracles as epistemic things* in Berlin, 2005¹⁶. Parallel to this, several monographic analyses treated this genre. In 1977 Ronald Finucane drew above all upon the rich material of the canonization of St. Thomas Becket, complementing it with other English miracle-lists¹⁷, and this has been the central dossier for the subsequent synthesis by Benedicta Ward in 1987 as well¹⁸. The phenomenon of miracles occupied a central place in André Vauchez's investigation of late medieval canonization processes in 1981¹⁹. The most comprehensive analysis of early medieval miracles was done by Pierre-André Sigal in 1985, based upon the statistical analysis of 2050 posthumous healing miracles, collected from seventy-six saints' lives and 166 miracle lists, before the end of the twelfth century²⁰. From among the more recent syntheses the book by Maria Wittmer-Butsch and Constance Rendtel deserves mention, who studied a sample of 454 healing miracles from the dossiers of six late medieval and one early modern saints²¹. And finally, we have the posthumously published monograph on *Miracles and Wonders* (and several other

¹¹ J. A. Hardon, « The Concept of Miracle from St. Augustine to Modern Apologetics », *Theological Studies* 15 (1954), p. 229-257.

¹² *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés*. Actes du Colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris (2-5 mai 1979), Paris, Études Augustiniennes, 1981.

¹³ S. Boesch Gajano and M. Modica, ed., *Miracoli. Dai segni alla storia*, Roma, Viella, 2000.

¹⁴ D. Aigle, ed., *Miracle et karāma. Hagiographies médiévales comparées*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000.

¹⁵ K. Herbers, M. Heinzelmänn and D. R. Bauer, ed., *Mirakel im Mittelalter, Konzeptionen, Erscheinungsformen, Deutungen*, Stuttgart, Steiner, 2002.

¹⁶ The rich material of this conference is still unpublished.

¹⁷ R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims, Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, London, J. M. Dent & Sons, 1977.

¹⁸ B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind. Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215*, Aldershot, Wildwood House, 1987.

¹⁹ A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge. D'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 1981, p. 495-557.

²⁰ P.-A. Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale (XI^e-XII^e siècle)*, Paris, Cerf, 1985.

²¹ M. Wittmer-Butsch and C. Rendtel, *Miracula. Wunderheilungen im Mittelalter*, Köln-Wien, Böhlau, 2003.

books and studies) by Michael Goodich – the synthesis of his life-long inquiry on the subject²².

Set against the background of this immense amount of documentation and scholarship, my aims in this paper will be very modest : I will examine some aspects of what could be called « pedagogy » in these healing miracle accounts, concentrating upon a distinct element in the narrative patterns characteristic of this genre, the conditions set by the saint for helping those who require his/her mediation.

Miracles of the saints have frequently been described as yet another phenomenon obeying the traditional *do ut des* logic of the sacrifice and gift in general²³, employing a set of methods to « coerce » the saints for providing the required help²⁴. The habitual procedures to approach the saints or their relics include the following elements. The miracle-seeking person or his relatives (« representatives ») should supplicate the saint for help and make a vow (*votum*) to the saint, promising a votive offering or different types of services to the shrine in exchange for the healing²⁵. This general condition is also enforced by numerous « miracles of vengeance » which illustrate that the saint could withdraw the healing effects of the miracle if the vow was not fulfilled according to promise²⁶. The miraculé generally thanked the saint for the successful healing in ritual form – the healing is instantaneously and loudly proclaimed at the shrine, it is repeated in

²² M. Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders : The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*, Aldershot, UK and Burlington, Vermont, Ashgate Publishing, 2007 ; *id.*, *Vita Perfecta : The Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century*, (Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 25) Stuttgart, Hiersemann, 1982 ; *Violence and Miracle in the Fourteenth Century. Private Grief and Public Salvation*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1995 ; *Lives and Miracles of the Saints. Studies in Medieval Latin Hagiography*, Aldershot, Ashgate/Variation, 2004.

²³ H. Hubert and M. Mauss, « Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice », *L'Année Sociologique* (1898), p. 24-138 ; M. Mauss, « Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques », *L'Année Sociologique*, n.s., 1 (1923-24), p. 30-186 ; repr. in M. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Paris, PUF, 1980, p. 145-279.

²⁴ P. Geary, « La coercition des saints dans la pratique religieuse médiévale », in *La culture populaire au Moyen Âge*, Études présentées au Quatrième colloque de l'Institut d'études médiévales de l'Université de Montréal, 2-3 avril, 1977, ed. Pierre Boglioni, Montréal, 1979, p. 145-61 ; *id.*, « L'humiliation des saints », *Annales E.S.C.* 34 (1979), p. 27-42 ; both are translated in *id.*, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1994, p. 95-124.

²⁵ For the process of supplication and vow in medieval miracle collections see Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle*, p. 80-134.

²⁶ P.-A. Sigal, « Un aspect du culte des saints : Le châtement divin aux XI^e et XII^e siècles d'après la littérature hagiographique du Midi de la France », in M.-H. Vicaire, ed., *La religion populaire en Languedoc du XIII^e à la moitié du XIV^e siècle. Cahiers de Fanjeaux*, 11, Toulouse, Privat, 1976, p. 49-59 ; E. Bozóky, « Les miracles de châtement au haut Moyen Âge et à l'époque féodale », in P. Cazier et J.-M. Delmaire, ed., *Violence et religion*, Lille, Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1998, p. 151-168 ; G. Klaniczay, « Miracoli di punizione e malefizia », in S. Boesch Gajano and M. Modica, ed., *Miracoli. Dai segni alla storia*, Roma, Viella, 1999, p. 109-137.

sermons, in miracle testimonies, it is remembered by *ex-voto* gifts, inscriptions, and later in the early modern period by paintings²⁷.

Within this broad set of ritualized transactions between the « patients » asking for a miracle and the saints one can find several miracles where the saints set some specific conditions for helping the persons turning to them, and, as it were, negotiate the « price » of the miracle with the clients. Such a negotiation is only feasible in two situations : in the miracles performed by the « living saint » or in the miracles where the saints appear to the patient in a dream-vision – *i.e.* the incubation miracles. Let me describe this latter genre first²⁸.

In the archetypal miracle collections of Sts. Cosmas and Damian, recorded in their Constantinopolitan church, the Cosmidion, between the fifth and the thirteenth centuries and comprising forty-eight miracle accounts²⁹, one can find several miracles where the conversion of the clients is the precondition of the healing. The second miracle in the collection narrates the story of a Jewish woman with cancer in her breast. For her healing she resorted to the rite of incubation in the church dedicated to Sts. Cosmas and Damian. This meant sleeping in the narthex with the other ailing pilgrims, waiting for the healing saints to appear in their dream and heal them on the spot or to instruct them about the kind of remedy they should take. The saints appeared to her three times, commanded her to eat pork, and refused to heal her unless she fulfilled this condition. Because of her intolerable pains, she ordered her Jewish servants and family members to bring her a piece of pork. They tried to dissuade her in vain, telling that following the saints' command would turn her against the Law and ancestral customs. But this was in fact the very aim of the saints, according to the hagiographer. When the relatives finally brought the pork and the woman was just at the point of starting to eat, she noticed her husband approaching, and she got frightened and hid the meat under her dress. Meanwhile the Lord, thanks to the saints' prayer, made the illness of the woman « jump » from her breast onto the meat. As soon as she became aware of the miracle, she hastened to get baptized³⁰. Another miracle of Cosmas and Damian tells the story of a pagan man visiting the saints and addressing them in a provocative manner as Castor and Pollux. He could not get healed until he justly acknowledged them as Cosmas and

²⁷ For a rich inventory of these gifts in the canonization processes, see Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident*, p. 519-39 ; for the early modern period see B. Cousin, *Le miracle et le quotidien : les ex-voto provençaux, images d'une société*, Aix-en-Provence, « Sociétés, mentalités, cultures », 1983.

²⁸ See the literature cited in note 3.

²⁹ L. Deubner, *De Incubatione capita quattuor*, Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1900 ; H. Delehay, « Les recueils antiques de Miracles de saints », *Analecta Bollandiana* 43 (1925), p. 1-85, 305-325 ; A.-J. Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien, Saints Cyr et Jean (extraits)*, Saint Georges, A. et J. Picard, Paris, 1971 (with a French translation of the Greek texts) ; for a recent overview, see I. Csepregi, « The Miracles of St Cosmas and Damian. Characteristics of Dream Healing », *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, 7 (2002), p. 89-122 ; she studied this material in detail in her Ph.D. Dissertation *The Compositional History of Greek Christian Incubation Miracle Collections : Saint Thecla, Saint Cosmas and Damian, Saint Cyrus and John and Saint Artemios*, defended in 2007 at the Central European University, Budapest.

³⁰ Miracles of Cosmas and Damian (KDM), 2, Festugière, *op. cit.*, p. 100-2.

Damian and converted to Christianity³¹. A third case is about an «Exakionite» (Arian) heretic. Though the saints reproach him for his erroneous faith, instead of refusing him the cure or tying it to the condition of his conversion, they cure him and then expel him from their church so that he does not contaminate the place with his heresies³². Conversion to Christianity as the precondition to miraculous healing, certainly logical from all points of view, refers also to a more generic concept on healing : in order to heal the body one must heal the soul as well, or rather, heal the soul first.

Besides this clearly propagandistic issue, other miracles set simpler conditions, such as commanding the client to stop cursing and pronouncing blasphemies or to turn to a diet and abstain from eating chicken³³, or to constrain the ill person to drink a repulsive but ultimately beneficial substance such as cedar-oil³⁴ or the *kerote* (the blessed liquid candle-wax)³⁵.

There are a few miracles in this collection where the two saints appear to be real tricksters, advancing shocking or enigmatic conditions for healing. The most famous story is about a mute noblewoman and a paralyzed man, both awaiting their cure sleeping in the church of Cosmas and Damian. The saints appeared in dream to the paralyzed man and told him he could only be cured if he made love to the mute woman besides him. He was really shocked, but then became gradually convinced by the insisting saints. When he finally made his attempt, tried to crawl closer to and approach the mute woman, she cried out loudly, calling a host of relatives to protect her. The paralyzed man had to run away for fear of getting lynched. Thus both of them got instantaneously cured from their illnesses³⁶. A similarly tricky advice was given when the saints suggested to a man who suffered from the retention of urine that he could only get healed by the pubic hair of Cosmas. This advice seemed to him a true sacrilege and an impossible condition until he discovered that a sheep given to the saints as votive offering and being kept there in the sanctuary also bore the name Cosmas, and willingly offered its hair for his healing³⁷. The miracle collection explains these cases by pointing out that the believers should really have a blind trust in the saints : « nobody should dare to refuse to accept any miracles or gestures from these saints [...] »³⁸.

Turning to Latin Christianity, the fitting counterpart to these Eastern miracle collections is the hagiographic œuvre of Gregory of Tours (d. 594), recording fifty miracles of St. Julian of Brioude, subsequently 207 miracles (grouped in four books) attributed to St. Martin of Tours³⁹, and also including two hagiographic overviews on the *Glory of the Martyrs* and the *Glory of the Confessors*⁴⁰.

³¹ KDM 9, Festugière, *Sainte Thècle, Saints Côme et Damien*, p. 110-112 ; Miracle 10 is also related to the conversion of a pagan, *ibid.*, p. 113-114.

³² KDM 17, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 134-136.

³³ Miracle 6, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁴ Miracle 11, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 116-120.

³⁵ Miracle 16, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 131-134.

³⁶ Miracle 24, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 158-159.

³⁷ Miracle 3, Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 102-104.

³⁸ Festugière, *ibid.*, p. 125.

³⁹ Gregorius Turonensis, *De passione et virtutibus sancti Iuliani martyris* (VJ), *De virtutibus sancti Martini episcopi* (VM) ; cf. van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles* ; M. Heinzelmann,

As in the case of Cosmas and Damian, the miraculous power of the saints is frequently put to the service of conversion as the necessary condition of the miracle. In the *Vita Iuliani* the negotiator setting the condition for the miracle is not the saint himself but the priest who only starts his intercession asking the saint when he gets the promise from the pagans to convert⁴¹. As for St. Martin of Tours, already his first life by Sulpicius Severus described several miracles of conversion. He transfixed a pagan funeral *cortège* through the sign of the cross, and only allowed them to move on when it turned out that their procession was not for a religious ceremony⁴². He only accepted to heal the pro-consul Tetradius from his possession when he promised to convert⁴³. Gregory of Tours continues this tradition in his own collection of St. Martin's miracles. He describes how the Sueves were converted from Arianism when «the king perceived that his son could not be cured until he believed that Christ was equal with the Father. He constructed a church of marvelous workmanship in honor of the blessed Martin, and upon its completion he announced: 'If I am considered worthy to receive the relics of this just man, I will believe whatever the bishops have proclaimed' »⁴⁴. The aim of conversion could also be pursued in a pastoral way: in the case of Sisulf, a poor man from Le Mans whose hand got disabled, the healing condition was his preaching service in the eradication of sins. At first he did not know what caused the crippling of his right hand, but an old man in a vision who later identified himself as St. Martin, explained: «Your disability reveals the anguish that awaits sinful people. Therefore go now through the villages and the fortresses, travel as far as the city, and proclaim that everyone is to abstain from perjury and usury and on Sundays no one is to do work contrary to the mystical rites... Therefore be prompt in announcing that people are to reform lest they die a cruel death as a result of their own crimes ». By accepting this instruction and repenting of his similar transgressions, Sisulf could eventually be healed⁴⁵.

The «pedagogical» aspect of the miracle accounts is also revealed in Gregory's œuvre by the unusually high percentage of «punishment miracles»: In the *Vita Iuliani* fourteen miracles out of fifty (*i.e.* 28%) belong to this genre⁴⁶. Gregory explains: «it seems to me that just as illnesses are reversed and healed by the saint's power, so also the depravities of unbelievers are restrained and exposed by his prayer for the correction of other people, lest they seek similar [follies] »⁴⁷. In the more ample collection of St. Martin's miracles the proportion of the punishment miracles is more modest (fourteen among 207 accounts), mostly related to the

Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁴⁰ Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, ed. R. van Dam, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1988.

⁴¹ VJ 6, Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 168.

⁴² Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, ed. J. Fontaine, Paris, Cerf, 1969, vol. I, p. 278-279, miracle 12; cf. C. Stancliffe, *Saint Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1983, p. 155-156.

⁴³ Miracle 17, Sulpice Sévère, *Vie de Saint Martin*, p. 289-291.

⁴⁴ VM I, 11, Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 211-212.

⁴⁵ VM II, 40, Van Dam, *ibid.*, p. 249-250.

⁴⁶ The miracles of vengeance are the following: VJ 5, 8, 10, 11, 13-20, 40, 44.

⁴⁷ Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 171.

protection of the saint's cult-site from robbery or the prohibition of work on Sunday⁴⁸. In Gregory's overview of the miracles of the confessors, the miracles of vengeance allow a good typology of the consequences of the misuse of relics by unworthy persons or in an unpermitted way ; the sacrilegious violation of the saint's sanctuary ; and the punishment for perjury on the relics⁴⁹.

The genre of the miracle of vengeance has a marked presence in several later medieval miracle collections. In the eleventh-century *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, one can read : « there is no more serious offense against Sainte Foy, none that will lead more surely to sudden disaster, than to intend evil against the affairs of her domain »⁵⁰. St. Foy struck blind a knight called Reinfroi who usurped a manor of the abbey, and whose sight could only be restored when he relinquished what he had taken and made a bare-foot pilgrimage to ask pardon at her relics. Subsequently she also appeared to him three times during the night, reminding him to stick to his promises and menacing him with renewed sanctions⁵¹. Alongside with a number of similar miracles punishing irreverence, aggression against St. Foy, her monastery or the pilgrims on their way there⁵², the other reason for the vengeance of the saint is that the beneficiary of the miracle does not keep his promise or vow, and because of this he/she falls back into the same illness. Already the famous initial miracle of the collection, the healing of the blind Guibert, whose eyes, torn out of their roots, had been miraculously cured, contains such a series of sanctions : « when he slipped back again and again into his habitual hog wallowing, divine vengeance soon followed : he lost the sight of one eye and repenting, recovered »⁵³. As for the *do ut des* type healing conditions, this collection offers some of the most straightforward formulations. In one account St. Foy appeared in dream to the wife of William, Count of Toulouse, and she told her that the reason for her apparition was that she should make a pilgrimage to Conques and give her her golden bracelets, placing them above the altar of the Saint Savior. The countess answered she would do it if she might conceive a male child, upon which St. Foy responded : « The Omnipotent Creator will do this quite easily for His own handmaiden, if you do not refuse what I ask ». This is a remarkable case : it is not the saint who came forward with the condition, but the prospective *miraculée*⁵⁴.

Another ample miracle-collection filled with many miracles of vengeance and conditions for healing is the *Miracula sancti Benedicti*, from the middle of the eleventh century⁵⁵. Henri Platelle has studied St. Rictrude, a seventh-century noble widow and abbess of Marchiennes in northern France, whose miracles, assembled

⁴⁸ The miracles of vengeance are the following : VM I, 2, 11, 17, 20, 21, 29, 30, 31 ; VM II, 24, 40 ; VM III, 3, 7, 29, 50, 56 ; VM IV, 7.

⁴⁹ Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Confessors*, Cap. 6, 18, 20, 31, 34, 39, 44, 53, 55, 58, 74 ; cf. Bozoky, « Les miracles du châtement ».

⁵⁰ Sheingorn and Clark, ed. and trans., *The Book of Sainte Foy*, p. 127.

⁵¹ III, 14, *ibid.*, p. 162-164.

⁵² I, 5, 6, 8, 10-15 ; III, 10, 13, *ibid.*, p. 58-81, 158-162.

⁵³ I, 1, Sheingorn and Clark, ed., *op.cit.*, p. 50.

⁵⁴ I, 19, Sheingorn and Clark, ed., *The Book of Sainte Foy*, p. 85 (this story is followed by several other miracles narrating donated rings) ; cf. also her nightly apparition for obtaining the golden clasp of countess Richarde, II, 10, *ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵⁵ E. de Certain, ed., *Miracula S. Benedicti*.

around 1130, contain twenty healings, twenty-five protecting miracles and twenty-three cases of vengeance⁵⁶. Pierre-André Sigal based his pertinent observations on the miracles of vengeance above all upon these collections, supplementing them with a few more cases from the early Middle Ages⁵⁷.

There has been a slight temptation in the historiography of the past decades to relate this kind of business-like relationship of the lay clients to the saints to what was labeled as « popular religion »⁵⁸. Sigal's path-breaking article on the miracles of vengeance appeared in a volume dedicated to popular religion. Patrick Geary distinguished in his article on the monastic rituals of the « humiliation of saints » also a « popular » ritual « designed to force the saints to protect their followers, the ritual of beating the saint's relics »⁵⁹. He quotes a case from the *Miracula sancti Benedicti*, where a peasant woman, mistreated by a certain nobleman called Adelard ran to the relics in the church, threw back the altar cloths, began striking the altar and cried to the saint. « Benedict, you sluggard, you sloth, what are you doing ? Why do you sleep ? Why do you allow your servant to be treated so ? »⁶⁰ Aron Gurevich also investigated the early medieval miracle accounts from the point of view of distinguishing « popular » and « official » conceptions of saintliness⁶¹. One can also find a case in the *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, where the saint was menaced that her reliquary statue would be flogged « and even thrown in a river or well unless Saint Foy avenged herself on the evil-doers immediately ». Nevertheless, in this last case we do not have to do with a peasant or even a layperson but with a monk named Gimon⁶², so the elite-popular distinction is difficult to be maintained for this case.

It would be fascinating to follow the evolution of this miracle type in the collections produced by the amplified hagiographic production of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a period which witnessed the forceful reappearance of the miracle-working « holy man » with St. Bernard of Clairvaux⁶³, and subsequently with St. Francis⁶⁴. There is no space for this here. In the second part of my study I would like

⁵⁶ H. Platelle, « Crime et châtement à Marchiennes. Étude sur la conception et le fonctionnement de la justice d'après les Miracles de sainte Rictrude (XIII^e s.) », *Sacris Erudiri*, 24 (1978/79), p. 156-202.

⁵⁷ Sigal, « Un aspect du culte des saints » ; *id.*, *L'homme et le miracle*, p. 276-282.

⁵⁸ On this category, in vogue in the 1970s and then falling in disfavor in the 1980s, see P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London, Temple Smith, 1977 ; for a critical insight see S. L. Kaplan, *Understanding Popular Culture : Europe from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century*, Paris, Mouton, 1984.

⁵⁹ Geary, *Living with the Dead*, p. 111.

⁶⁰ E. de Certain, ed., *Miracula S. Benedicti*, p. 282-283 ; Geary, *Living with the Dead*, p. 112-113.

⁶¹ Cf. the chapter « Peasants and Saints » in A. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture : Problems of Belief and Perception*, tr. by J. M. Bak and P. A. Hollingsworth, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 39-77.

⁶² I, 26, Sheingorn and Clark, ed., *The Book of Sainte Foy*, p. 94.

⁶³ A. Picard, P. Boglioni, « Miracle et thaumaturgie dans la vie de Saint Bernard », in *Vues et légendes de Saint Bernard*, Cîteaux, Présence Cistercienne, 1993, p. 36-59.

⁶⁴ On the explosion of miracles after the death of Saint Francis, see Thomas de Celano, *Vita Prima*, III, cap. 123, in E. Menestò and S. Brufani et al., ed., *Fontes franciscani*, Assisi,

to confront the early medieval examples, where the miracle stories were shaped by the rhetoric of hagiography, with the slightly changed genre of late medieval miracle collections, recorded in the legalistic atmosphere of canonization processes. Could the educative and pedagogical intentions of early medieval hagiographers and miracle-tale-tellers impose themselves also in these new conditions? Apparently there were some difficulties: we only find sporadic – though interesting – examples of this kind among the thousands of miracles documented in late medieval canonization processes. Let me present a few cases before putting the question: why?

The first example is from the canonization process of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, a saintly princess, daughter of King Andrew II of Hungary, and pious widow of Ludwig IV, landgrave of Thuringia (d. 1231)⁶⁵, whose investigation had been carried out between 1232 and 1235, recording the testimonies of about 800 witnesses on altogether 129 miraculous healings⁶⁶. The only miracle-story among these with a specific condition for the cure is related to the healing of a widow named Guta, who had a polyp in the nose, suffering from it for twelve years. « While she was ill, she had been a member of the unbelievers' sect called the Poor of Lyons. In this condition she could not obtain remedy to this illness, neither from a living human being, nor from those who have left their bodies and are now in a glorious state. But finally she changed her mind, denied her sect and turned to the benefices of the confession, and received due penance from her priest. Having accomplished this, she hastened to the tomb of Lady Elizabeth, wife of the landgrave, to implore her for her help... and having finished her prayer she instantly got liberated from her illness. »⁶⁷

This story, recorded in the dry tone of the notaries, is certainly not the construction of a hagiographer; it rather shows the imprint of a strong-handed interpreter, the initiator of the canonization of Saint Elizabeth, her confessor, Conrad of Marburg, who was, at the same time, a relentless persecutor of Waldensian heretics. In fact the whole canonization investigation of Elizabeth was intended to be

Porziuncola, 1995, p. 402; Thomas of Celano's *First Life of St. Francis of Assisi*, tr. by C. Stace, London, Triangle, 2000, p. 126.

⁶⁵ On her life and cult see D. Blume and M. Werner, ed., *Elisabeth von Thüringen: Eine europäische Heilige, Aufsätze*, Berlin, Michael Imhof Verlag, 2007; O. Gecser, « Lives of St. Elizabeth: Their Rewritings and Diffusion in the Thirteenth Century », *Analecta Bollandiana*, 127 (2009), p. 49-107.

⁶⁶ A. Huyskens, *Quellenstudien zur Geschichte der hl. Elisabeth*, Marburg, N. G. Elwert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1908, p. 161-266; on the analysis of these miracles see E. Busse-Wilson, « Die Wunder am Grabe der heiligen Elisabeth », in *Beiträge zur hessischen Kirchengeschichte. Ergänzungsband XI*, Darmstadt, 1939, p. 184-209; B. R. Wendel Widmer, *Die Wunderheilungen am Grabe der Heiligen Elisabeth von Thüringen. Eine medizinhistorische Untersuchung*, Zürich, Juris, 1987; G. Klaniczay, « Proving sanctity in the canonization processes (Saint Elizabeth and Saint Margaret of Hungary) », in G. Klaniczay, ed., *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge. Aspects juridiques et religieux – Medieval Canonization Processes. Legal and Religious Aspects*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 2004, p. 117-148.

⁶⁷ I, 18, Huyskens, *Quellenstudien*, p. 174-175.

a statement against the heresies of the age⁶⁸. just as in general the whole religious ideal embodied by St. Elizabeth, the new-style *sponsa Christi*, the aristocratic and mendicant widow living in renunciation as a nurse in a hospital of lepers. The ideal incorporated by her could indeed be the symbolic antithesis of the one represented by the heretic widow in the miracle account, punished by God with that nasty illness.

The condition for this healing is clearly set by Conrad of Marburg, Elizabeth's stern confessor who was regularly preaching in the church in the proximity of Elizabeth's sarcophagus, presenting her example as an antidote to sin and heresy. His interpretation of her exemplarity was conditioned by his multiple functions of inquisitor and papal legate documenting and investigating Elizabeth's life and miracles and, as mentioned above, as a persecutor of Waldensian heretics⁶⁹. With all these involvements one might even wonder, why he did not include (or generate ?) more miracle accounts of this kind in the collection of the first 106 miraculous healings (*Miracula Sancte Elyzabet*) he compiled in 1233, before his being murdered by heretics on 30 July, 1233.

Elizabeth's miracle accounts also include a few examples of the *miraculés* attempting to set their own conditions in the transactions with the saint, this archaic feature reminiscent of the earlier medieval cases we have referred to. The mother of a nine-year-old girl having a hump and goiter and having spent ten days at the sepulcher of the saint without receiving the miraculous healing they were begging for, «...started to grudge against Elizabeth, saying: 'I will warn everyone not to visit your tomb since you did not listen to me!'». And this threat did have its effect: the girl was cured by a nightly vision of the saint not long thereafter⁷⁰.

Another account describes the healing of a lame burger from Frankfurt, called Gerhardus, who also had a big hump on his back. Having been carried by a carriage to the grave of St. Elizabeth in Marburg and spending three weeks there his hump was miraculously cured. Then he decided to offer a bargaining supplication so that he could get cured also from his lameness: «St. Elizabeth, I cannot come back to you again unless you have mercy on me; I would come [to your grave] if I have the ability»⁷¹. As an apparition in a dream indicated to him, his plea was heard and his faculty to stand up and walk gradually returned.

The question arises: could one build a sociological interpretation upon these two slightly exotic cases from among more than hundred more «standard» vows, simply promising gifts, services and pilgrimage to the saint? Could one label them as a more «popular» version of miracle belief than the attitudes to be discerned from the testimonies of her handmaids, whose recollections were compiled into the

⁶⁸ This has recently been underlined by D. Elliott, *Proving Woman. Female Spirituality and Inquisitorial Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 85-117.

⁶⁹ A. Patschowski, «Zur Ketzerverfolgung Konrads von Marburg», *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 37 (1981), p. 641-693.

⁷⁰ I, 3, Huyskens, *Quellenstudien*, p. 159-60: «...mater irata murmuravit contra dominam Elyzabet, dicens, « omnes avertam homines a visitatione sepulchri tui, quia non exaudisti me ».

⁷¹ I, 28, Huyskens, *Quellenstudien*, p. 184: « Sancta Elyzabet, ad te de cetero non veniam, nisi de tua misericordia per me vadam; et ibo, si mihi fuerit facultas ».

charming *Libellus de dictis quator ancillarum*⁷²? There is certainly a difference in the religious attitudes, but the evidence is unfortunately rather thin.

My second set of thirteenth century examples are from the canonization process of Saint Stanislaus, the martyr bishop of Cracow, the Polish Becket (*avant la lettre*) murdered in 1079, whose cult only developed in the thirteenth century⁷³. There were two rounds of investigation gathering the testimonies on fifty-two miracles and obtaining his canonization in 1253⁷⁴.

Among these miracles we find two where the envoys of the martyred bishop appear to sleeping afflicted persons and order the supplicants to personally urge the representatives of the Cracow bishopric to initiate his canonization procedures. In Miracle 27 a German noblewoman suffering from fever is first solicited by the nightly appearance of a *matrona reverenda*: « Adleyta, stand up and go to Cracow to the sepulcher of blessed Stanislaus and tell Troian, the *custos* of the church where the body of that saint lies, that he tell the bishop, that he should not let the body of the said saint lie in the dust, but should hurry to elevate his bones and wash them in wine and put them in an urn above the ground, and you would immediately be liberated from your ailment; but if you do not do and tell all this, you will never be freed from this illness. » As a first attempt she made the pilgrimage to the grave without telling there the dream and stepping up as an agent for the initiation of Stanislaus' canonization, and indeed, she did not get healed. Then a second nightly appearance, this time of a *homo venerabilis* speaking in *Teotonica lingua* and repeating the same recommendation convinced her that she should obey, and having done this eventually she got healed⁷⁵. Another very similar account (Miracle 35) is told by a *comes* named Falus, who is sent by a nightly vision during his illness to bishop Prandota to urge the canonization of Stanislaus. At first he gets better after this vision, but when he neglects the order of the saint, he gets ill again and is reprimanded in a second nightly vision by a « *homo quidam canus et reverende*

⁷² A. Huyskens, *Der sogenannte Libellus de dictis quatuor ancillarum s. Elisabeth confectus*, München/Kempten, Kösel, 1911; I. Würth, «Die Aussagen der vier Dienerinnen im Kanonisationsverfahren Elisabeths von Thüringen (1235) und ihre Überlieferung im Libellus», *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Thüringische Geschichte*, 59/60 (2005/06), p. 7-74.

⁷³ A. Rożnowska-Sadraei, *Pater Patriae: The Cult of Saint Stanislaus and the Patronage of Polish Kings 1200-1455*, Cracow, Unum, 2008; on the relationship of the figure and the cult of St. Stanislaus to that of Becket, see W. Uruszczak, «Les répercussions de la mort de Thomas Becket en Pologne (XII^e-XIII^e siècles)», in *Thomas Becket, Actes du Colloque International de Sédières*, 19-24 août 1973, ed. R. Foreville, Paris, Beauchesne, 1975, p. 115-125; S. Kuzmova, «Preaching on Martyr Bishops in the Later Middle Ages: Saint Stanislaus of Kraków and Saint Thomas Becket», in *Britain and Poland-Lithuania. Contact and Comparison from the Middle Ages to 1795*, ed. R. Unger and J. Basista, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2008, p. 67-85.

⁷⁴ The canonization documents of St. Stanislaus were edited by W. Kętrzyński, *Miracula sancti Stanislai*, in *Monumenta Poloniae Historica*. Lviv, 1884, vol. 4, p. 285-318; J. Pleziowa and Z. Perzanowski, ed., «Cuda Świętego Stanisława», *Analecta Cracoviensia*, 11 (1979), p. 47-141; cf. A. Witkowska, «The thirteenth-century Miracula of St. Stanislaus, Bishop of Krakow», in Klaniczay, ed., *Procès de canonisation*, p. 149-63.

⁷⁵ *Miracula sancti Stanislai*, p. 305-306.

persone indutus superpellicio albo, who rises above him and exclaims indignantly: 'And you neglected!' ». Then he indeed went to the bishop and got healed⁷⁶.

These two miracle accounts preserve the memory of the uneven support of the cult of Stanislaus by the bishops of Cracow: after the initiatives by Vincent Kadlubek (1208-1218) and Iwo Odrowąż (1218-1229) their successor Wisław (1232-1242) neglected the issue, and only Prandota (1242-1266) carried it to conclusion.⁷⁷ It is also typical that the nightly «envoys» of Stanislaus solicit the advocacy of a noblewoman and a comes – *i.e.* from high social status.

Yet another interesting miracle account from this corpus is the case of a raging madman, bound by chains and laid beside the sarcophagus of the saint for four days and nights (Miracle 42). On the last night St. Stanislaus, dressed as a priest, appears to him and says «Come with me and you will be set free». In a dream the envoys of the saint bishop take him to a Cracow church dedicated to St. Andrew where he sees again St. Stanislaus in episcopal vestments, and receiving a group of persons, all raging with madness and tortured by other afflictions. The bishop explains to the *miraculé*: «These are the people who gave false testimonies, brought improper judgments and did fraudulent business with others, this is why they suffer; you should abstain from such evil things, and go and tell them that they should do penance and they will be healed just like you have been healed now»⁷⁸. Together with a brief reference to the emergent doctrine of the Purgatory⁷⁹, this miracle account bears the imprint of the pedagogy of late medieval moral preaching.

My third set of thirteenth-century examples comes from the cult of St. Margaret of Hungary, St. Elizabeth's niece, daughter of Béla IV, King of Hungary, who spent her life as a Dominican nun and died in 1270, in the royal convent founded for her on the Danube island near Buda⁸⁰. Two investigations into her sanctity were held between 1272 and 1276, providing documentation of altogether ninety-five miracles⁸¹.

While there are several miracles in this collection where St. Margaret was told to have appeared to those who required her help, there are no instances where

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 311: *dixit ei, cum quadam indignatione se eleuando super eum: Et tu neglexisti!*

⁷⁷ Rożnowska-Sadraei, *Pater Patriae*, p. 43-45.

⁷⁸ *Miracula sancti Stanislai*, p. 315-316.

⁷⁹ Cf. J. Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981.

⁸⁰ On the life and cult of St. Margaret of Hungary see G. Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 195-294.

⁸¹ *Vita beate Margarite de Ungaria Ordinis Predicatorum*, in K. Böle, *Árpádházi Boldog Margit szenttéavatási ügye és a legősibb latin Margit-legenda* [The Canonization Case of the Blessed Margaret of the Arpad Dynasty and the Oldest Margaret Legend], Budapest, Stephaneum, 1937, p. 17-43; it is also included in the reprinted and augmented version of Emericus Szentpétery, ed., *Scriptores Rerum Hungaricarum tempore ducum regumque stirpis Arpadianae gestarum*, Budapest, Academia Litter. Hungarica, 1938, 2nd ed. Budapest, Nap Kiadó, 1999, p. 685-709, I will refer to this last edition; V. Fraknói, ed., *Inquisitio super vita, conversatione et miraculis beatae Margarethae virginis, Belae IV. Hungarorum regis filiae, sanctimonialis monasterii virginis gloriosae de insula Danubii, Ordinis Praedicatorum, Vesprimis diocesis*, in *Monumenta Romana episcopatus Vesprimiensis*, Budapest, 1896, Tomus I, p. 162-383.

she was reported to have set a condition for her help. The only case coming close to this type is a miracle of vengeance, reported to the investigators by her niece, also named Margaret, who was the target of the saint's revenge :

« On a certain day, when the said virgin Margaret had taken up her position for intense prayer, a bone became dislocated in her shoulder, so that she was in much pain, and the prioress and the other sisters were sorry for her and went searching for medicines to cure her, and I, witnessing this, began saying to myself, 'Why all this fuss about medicines for this nun' and I said this with a kind of secret mockery. Immediately I began to experience a terrible pain in my shoulder-blade, in the very spot she had hers, and then I cast myself at the feet of that virgin Margaret and told her what I had been thinking and what had happened to me, excoriating myself and asking her to pardon me ; and at once the said virgin Margaret said, 'May the Lord forgive you,' and I was immediately cured. »⁸²

This miracle, which I once analyzed in an essay entitled *Miraculum and Maleficium*⁸³, is very reminiscent of the bewitchment narratives : the person with supernatural capacities detects by mind-reading the hostility or the offense against her, retaliates with magical vengeance, and liberates the victim of the harmful effects only after receiving expiation for the offense or after being constrained to do so. I am not saying that the Margaret miracle corresponds precisely to this case, yet there are intriguing similarities, which also relate to a number of older miracle accounts considering the illness as a punishment for an offense against the saint.

The probably tense relation between St. Margaret and her namesake is also underlined by another account which recalls the early medieval cases of the coercion of saints. Not long after the death of St. Margaret she is reported to have said, «Virgin Margaret, if you want me to believe that you are a saint, show me some kind of a miracle ! »⁸⁴

However quantitatively rare, these thirteenth-century examples do take us into a domain more complex than the simple *do ut des* philosophy of early medieval miracle accounts : a pedagogy under the sign of the inquisition, moral preaching and the charismatic – and also ambivalent – power of the living saint. Instead of a 'two-tiered' model, differentiating between a « popular » and an « elite » or « ecclesiastical » understanding of the miracle-transaction with the saint, in the late medieval miracle collections the differences of social status tend to be expressed by the dominating role played by powerful inquisitors, bishops or royal saints, saintly princesses.

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⁸² Fraknói, ed., *Inquisitio*, p. 182-183, cf. the same story told by other nuns p. 187, 192, 275.

⁸³ G. Klaniczay, « *Miraculum and Maleficium* : Reflections Concerning Late Medieval Female Sainthood », in *Problems in the Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Europe*, ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia and R. W. Scribner, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen Bd. 78, Wiesbaden, Harrasowitz, 1997, p. 49-74.

⁸⁴ Fraknói, ed., *Inquisitio*, p. 187 : *soror Margaretha, filia domine Anne dixit* : « *Virgo Margaretha, si vis quod ego credam, quod tu sis sancta, ostende mihi aliquod miraculum* ».